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TAGS: OPRC KMDR TU
SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2008

In Today's Papers

Constitutional Court Releases Opinion Regarding Headscarf Verdict
All papers: The Constitutional Court publicly issued its written opinion in the decision to annul a constitutional amendment allowing female students to wear headscarves in universities. Mainstream Hurriyet reports that the Court's decision said, "The amendment was an attempt to use religion as a tool for political motives and it is against the principle of secularism." Hurriyet notes that the Court's decision also said, "Wearing a religious symbol could become a tool used to pressure people with different political or religious views." Mainstream Sabah reports that the Constitutional Court president Hasim Kilic and member Sacit Adali criticized the verdict and said "this is judicial guardianship." A professor on Constitutional Law, Prof. Ergun Ozbudun, said "the verdict oversteps judicial authority." Liberal Radikal's headline reads "Parliament's Legislative Authority is Restricted" and reports that a law professor from the AKP, Burhan Kuzu, said "the verdict curbed parliament of its functions." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak quotes Hasim Kilic, the president of the Constitutional Court as saying "setting rules on clothing in universities contradicts academic freedoms. Universities are not military barracks. The Court has gone far beyond its limits as stated by the Constitution." Mainstream Milliyet quotes PM Erdogan saying at his party meeting that "the Constitutional Court overstepped its authority."

Editorial Commentary: Constitutional Court Decision on the Turban issue

Ergun Babahan wrote in mainstream Sabah: "This country has continuously denied two issues for years - Kurdish rights and headscarf freedom. Turkey has ignored the Kurds' presence and has banned them from using their mother tongue. Moreover, torture was used against the Kurds during the September 12th process, which paved the way to an increase in PKK activities. Now, Turkey is ignoring the headscarf issue. The administrators of this country should realize that it will not be possible to establish peace in this country if Kurdish broadcasting is not allowed, if the Kurds' right to use their mother tongue is ignored, or if girls are banned from school because they are wearing headscarves and thus girls are

deprived of their basic rights to education."

Taha Akyol wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "The Constitutional Court decision regarding the headscarf ban in the universities is a political one. The high court seized on the parliament's decision to lift the ban and reached a decision based on the high court members' political beliefs. But, there is nothing anyone can do about this. There is no higher court to which an appeal can be made... All we can do is to criticize the decision and defend contemporary liberal beliefs. But while doing this, we should never disrespect the Court's decision."

Mehmet Tezkan wrote in mainstream Vatan: "The AKP is responsible for turning the use of headscarves into a political symbol. PM Erdogan's deepened the crisis when he said, "The headscarf is not a political symbol, but even if it is, so what?" The Constitutional Court's decision is trying to say "regardless of the percentage of votes a party receives, no one can damage the principle of secularism embedded in the Constitution."

Ergun Ozbudun wrote in Islamist oriented Zaman: "The recent Court decision regarding the headscarf issue reminded us of the seriousness of the constitution problems facing Turkey's democracy. Only a new constitution can solve Turkey's problems. This constitution must reflect global and democratic values regarding freedom. Otherwise, Turkey will remain partially democratic and partially free, as Turkey has been described on the international polling companies' lists."

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A New Structure against Terrorism

Sabah, Milliyet, Hurriyet, Vatan, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others: Today's papers report that a new era is beginning in the fight against terrorism. Mainstream Sabah says that a new structure will be established within the Interior ministry to fight terror, called the Homeland Security Undersecretariat. The Interior Minister will now carry the title "Deputy Prime Minister." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports that a homeland security board and a homeland security secretariat general will be established, and will have offices in the Middle East and in Europe.

The Dollar Flies in Turkey. (Milliyet)

All media outlets note that although the Turkish economy has not experienced the same ill effects as other economies in the recent global financial crisis, the U.S. dollar has suddenly risen sharply against the Turkish lira in recent days. Mainstream Milliyet reports in "Foreigners Flee and the Dollar Flies," that "Investors are fleeing from developing nations and hedge fund sales are on the rise," as "the dollar climbs and all eyes are on the Central Bank," in order to strengthen the Turkish currency. Mainstream Vatan reports, "Turkey will offer limitless guarantees on two-year bank deposits in order to attract deposits from foreign markets back into Turkey's banking system." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports, "Foreign investors are frightened," so "the dollar surges against the lira." Economic daily Referans reports in "Here Are the Reasons for the 2-Day Surge in the Dollar," that "\$15 Billion in foreign investment has left the Turkish economy."

Editorial Commentary on Russia-Armenia relationship

Fikret Ertan wrote in Islamist-oriented Zaman: "Russian President Medvedev paid an official visit to Yerevan earlier this week. This is one of the four times that Sarkisyan and Medvedev have met during 2008. According to a source close to the highest levels of the Kremlin, the talks during this summit aimed at strengthening the alliance and the political dialogue between Russia and Armenia. This source said that face to face meetings between Medvedev and Sarkisyan are expected to continue, but it's not known yet if any decisions or agreements will come out of the meetings. Since 1991, Russia has made close to \$2 billion in investments in Armenia, with \$428 million of these investments made only in this year alone. From this perspective, the recent summit between Russia and Armenia shows the bilateral partnership is strengthening. We must be informed of these developments. Of course that's what we're trying for."

TV News:
NTV

Domestic News

- FM Babacan met with Shiite leader of Iraq Al-Hekim yesterday and asked for active cooperation against PKK.

- 5,000 people attended the funeral of Ahmet Ozkan, who was shot dead during an illegal protest in Dogubeyazit. The funeral turned into a pro-PKK demonstration.

- Diyarbakir's Chief Prosecutor's Office has launched an investigation into DTP leader Ahmet Turk for his recent remarks in Diyarbakir.

- The parliament approves a bill that grants amnesty to students dismissed from university after June 7, 1995.

- The court rejects a request from the Ergenekon suspects for the appointment of a new judge to hear their case.

International News

- British Prime Minister Gordon Brown says the British economy is

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likely to fall into a recession for the first time in 16 years.

- Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government President Massoud Barzani pays a visit to Iran.

- The United States signs an accord allowing more than 80 personnel to take part in a vast European Union justice mission in Kosovo.

WILSON